

The Registrar of Contractors cautions wildfire victims in southern Arizona of potential home construction scams

Victims of the Aspen fire in southern Arizona need to be wary of fly-by-night contractors and door-to-door scam artists eager to capitalize on the misfortunes of others. The Arizona Registrar of Contractors (ROC) reminds homeowners to make sure they select licensed contractors for construction and repair work.

“We want to protect the wildfire victims so they are not further harmed by unlicensed contractors,” says ROC Director Israel G. Torres. “Victims of natural disaster can be extremely vulnerable to unscrupulous contractors seeking to take advantage of their plight. Transient groups of unlicensed contractors follow disasters to make quick money and usually seek painting, carpentry, roofing work and home repairs.”

Homeowners should take the following steps when hiring a contractor:

1. Be sure the contractor and all subcontractors are properly licensed with the ROC. To do this, visit <http://www.azroc.gov/clsc/AZROCLicenseQuery> or call 888-271-9286.
2. Contact the Better Business Bureau of Southern Arizona at 520-888-5353 and check for complaints filed against contractors.
3. Obtain written bids from at least three licensed contractors. Be cautious of bids that seem too good to be true.
4. Ask for references and check with previous customers.
5. Carefully plan and pre-approve the project.
6. Negotiate a clear contract in writing that includes:
 - A list of materials with specifications
 - Start and end dates
 - The total price and payment schedule. Ask if there is a cancellation penalty and any stipulations.
 - Special requests or features
 - A list of contractor “dos” and “don’ts”
7. Ask to see all necessary building permits from the contractor.
8. Put all changes in writing.
9. Sign for completion only after you have done a thorough “walk-through” and are satisfied with the work.

To report unlicensed contractor activity in the Aspen Fire area, construction fraud or to learn more about how you can protect yourself from home repair scams, contact the ROC Tucson Regional Office at 520-628-6345.

The Arizona Registrar of Contractors (ROC) regulates construction contractors by providing a licensing and regulatory system for residential and commercial contractors designed to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public. Additionally, the ROC offers financial protection to residential consumers who use licensed contractors through its Residential Contractors’ Recovery Fund. Established in 1931, the ROC has a staff of more than 140 employees and operates 11 offices statewide. For more information, call 602-524-1525, or outside Maricopa County at 888-271-9286 or visit www.azroc.gov.